The Second Hero's Record

Nogi Sonoko joined the Sanshu Middle School Hero Club. Her existence gave the club members new stimuli. The lively sleepovers they were having now was part of that. The purpose of the sleepovers was to get everyone to know each other better and get along. It was supposed to be an event meant for the newly joined member, Sonoko, but the existing members enjoyed themselves too.

Today, Karin came over to stay at Sonoko's place.

—This sure relaxes the body, doesn't it, Nibosshi?

—True, it does make me feel all warm and fuzzy all the way to the inside...

—Types like us whose offerings reached our whole bodies have to take care of every part of our bodies, you know~ Gotta take care~ take care~

The Nogi Household's rose bath had the same composition of that of a hot spring.

—Um, the bath feels nice and all, but, well, is it really necessary for the two of us to be in it together?

—I think it's more fun to bathe together~ We can talk this way~ Are you embarrassed, Nibosshi?

—Well, yeah, I guess.

—But you got into the hot spring with everyone, didn't you~

—I think there's a difference between a hot spring and a home bath...

—Yu-yu loved it~ And Wasshi's already used to it.

—That does sound like them...

—...

—Wh-what's wrong?

—Nibosshi, you're cuter with your hair down, huh~ That's so lovely~

—N-not especially, I don't think...

—That's a cute reaction~ I'm sure the readers would love a character like you~ my creative urges are rising~

—Huh, what are you talking about?

—Nothing at all~

Karin felt slightly teased by Sonoko's characteristic pace. But she didn't find the situation unpleasant at all.

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Inubouzaki Fuu was mulling over something at her own house. Her little sister, Itsuki was thinking alongside her too.

Nogi Sonoko's addition was quite an asset to the Sanshu Middle School Hero Club. Fuu was already a third year student and it was already fall. It was almost time for the next club president to be decided for real. And naturally, that meant choosing one of the four second years.

—Hmm, they're all wonderful upperclassmen... so I wouldn't worry about that either way.

—Then let's consider each one one by one. I think Tougou's superb, but I get the feeling she's not geared towards being a club president. What do you think?

—I think Tougou-sempai would be able to handle being club president, but... It was kinda tough when she filled in for club president earlier...

—True. Next up is Yuuna. She seems like the most likely to display enough power as a leader, but it makes me always makes me a little uneasy to think of her as a club president.

—If Yuuna-san were club president and Tougou-sempai were her assistant, I get the feeling that everything would work out smoothly.

—Yeah, that combination does sound like it could work. So next, how about Nogi?

—I first believed in humans having things like auras when I saw Sempai.

—Her gravitas really is amazing, huh. Wild birds perch on her fingers. Wild dogs obey her commands. It's as if all creation accepts her... Exactly what you'd expect from the leader of the previous generation of heroes. Normally, I'd be uneasy about her being club president, but if Tougou is her assistant, then there probably won't be any problems. I mean, that's how the previous generation was, after all.

—If you think about it, Tougou-sempai is better as an assistant than a leader, huh?

—At now, at least. So, last up's Karin, I guess.

—Karin-san as club president. Yeah, I think that sounds really good.

—You seem emotionally attached to her, Itsuki. But yeah, right now, I think that out of all four candidates, I'd recommend Karin as club president. It'll probably be hard for her, but she is the 'perfect hero' after all, so I'm sure she can manage somehow.

—So that's why you've been getting Karin-san to help out with lots of things then, huh, Onee-chan?

—Exactly. I'm training her now.

—Good work. You're always thinking about the Hero Club, aren't you? Let me reward you.

Itsuki got up and stood behind her older sister's chair to massage her shoulders.

—Oh-ohhh~ That feels so good~ I didn't know you've been training your massage skills, Itsukiii.

—It's no match for Yuuna-san's anma massage, though.

—That's an outlier. It's like she can massage you down to your soul.

As they spoke, the older sister thought how promising her little sister's growth was.

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Recently, Sonoko wasn't showing up at the Hero Club each day.

Sometimes she'd go to the Taisha and gather information. Going to and from the Taisha was a privilege that not even Karin, whose older brother was in top management, nor Fuu, being district representative, were afforded. Sonoko was a special case, being the daughter of the upper class Nogi family and having been worshiped at one point, and was thus afforded some flexibility within the Taisha.

Currently, the information Sonoko gained was mostly just about what direction the next Hero System was headed. But even that information was just hearsay, and they could not be sure if it was 100% truth. The truth behind what lied outside the wall was a scene so tremendously shocking it was hard to believe. Countermeasures had to be taken. That was the Taisha's duty. All the girls needed to do was fulfill their duties as students, and if they were needed again, they would probably be called.

And even though she understood their reasoning, she couldn't remain still after seeing something like that. There had to be something she could do. There were too many puzzles that had to be solved.

What exactly was a Vertex in the first place?

What ended the Christian Era and began the Divine Era?

In the off chance that they'd have to fight again, she would not have any of it if they were sent to suffer again without knowing anything. The Taisha may have been more willing to explain themselves now, but they had a need to know the truth behind their own commitments as well. That said, the Taisha had worked in secrecy for hundreds of years. Sonoko thought it might take them some time. She would have to patiently assemble information.

—I've got a request for the Hero Club~

Sonoko suddenly spoke up in the Hero Club room.

—So you mean you're the one sending in the request, Sonocchi?

—Hero Club Five Tenets: If you're worried, talk to someone, right~

—That's unusual. You've got a request for us, Nogi? Heh, don't tell me you've actually found someone you like?

—There's someone Sono-chan likes!?

Yuuna bolted up out of her chair.

—This looks like a job for Itsuki.

—Okay, I'll read your fortune! ...Okay, I've got the results. This looks like it'll be a good romance!

—My little sister has a knack for drawing the Death card, but she drew a good one this time, huh. Looks great!

—Yay! So, Sono-chan, who do you like?

—You know, I get the feeling Nogi's compatible with a caring, on-the-ball kinda guy. Man, if only there were a man like me, you know?

—Well~ I'm not sure what I like exactly, but someone who's diligent and takes good care of others would be lovely~. It'd be even more fun if they were way too serious and got reckless from time to time, huh~

—Everyone calm down. Sonocchi's not asking for any romantic advice. The discussion's derailing too far. Sonocchi, knows it's derailing and isn't going along with it.

—Huh, is that so?

—If you follow the conversation back through, it's Karin's fault for not throwing in a retort before Itsuki did her fortunetelling.

—I think it's more your fault for making the unnecessary comment at the beginning, Fuu!

—It's so nice that you get along so well that you two can fight~

Sonoko watched Fu and Karin and kept nodding to herself for some reason.

—Come on, Sonocchi, what is it that's troubling you?

—Ooohh, That's right. That's right. I'd like you guys to help me sort through some books~. I wanted some material for my novels, so I asked for some history books to sent in from my family house's archive, and they sent me a huuuumongous amount of them. My place is covered in cardboard boxes now~

—You read history books... That's great, Sonocchi.

Tougou nodded in approval.

—Of course we'll help. But wouldn't the Taisha help if you asked them, Nogi? ...Or is there something happen?

—No, the people at the Taisha are nice~ They'll do anything for me as long as it's not divulging secrets~ But there are some circumstances with this matter.

—Hmm, and are those circumstances of romance?

—Why do you always try to connect things to romance?

—Ahahah, that's the tragedy of having such overflowing girl power. I can't help but talk girl talk. Sorry, Nogi, please continue.

—I was just thinking that maybe~ Maybe some of the books I received had escaped Taisha censorship. So that's why I can't ask the Taisha for help, see~

—Books that escaped censorship... Those exist?

—Well, they are books that have been kept at the Nogi household for a long time. It's almost like a treasure hunt!

—Okay, let's go help with sorting those books without thinking too deeply about it, shall we? As club president, I approve of Nogi's suggestion.

And thus, the hero club's schedule for Sunday was designated as the day to help Sonoko out in sorting through the books at her place.

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On the weekend, the Hero Club gathered and headed to Sonoko's place.

The Hero Club had a small boom in sleepovers, so at that time, everyone had been to Sonoko's place, so they didn't get lost on the way. She rented out an apartment by the station. It was a new, very high class-looking building.

—Tougou, is that bag full of botamochi?

—Yes. I flavored it to Sonocchi's liking. What did you bring, Fuu-sempai?

—A nutrition-packed Inubouzaki bento.

—In other words, a normal bento.

The five girls entered Sonoko's room in a harmonious mood.

—Welcome, guys~

—Your place smells as nice coming in as always, Nogi.

—I love this smell. It's very calming... uwaah, that's a lot of cardboard boxes, huh, Sono-chan?

—The room's buried in them. Not even the perfect hero's mind could have predicted there'd be this many.

—I didn't expect them to send so many~ A lot of them are unsealed and organized, but there's just too much to handle. It's a real help to have you guys around~

—By the way, Itsuki, have you been cleaning your own room?

—I-I am, but we're not talking about me right now, are we, Karin-san?—

—I was just worried about you as my underclassman.

—It is worrying. Itsuki-chan needs some polishing.

Tougou and Karin nodded at each other.

—Your upperclassmen have their eyes on you, huh? That's my sister, Itsuki. You make a good underclassman.

—That's just because I'm the only underclassman...

—Welp, we better get to work now, huh. Let's get to it and sort out these books.

—Let's sort through these cardboard boxes first. Let's put the contents here.

Tougou lifted up a heavy cardboard box and smoothly transported it.

—Okay, let's follow after Tougou-san!

Yuuna, Karin, and Sonoko also began transporting the boxes.

—Mmmmm, it's heavy....

Only Itsuki was having having a hard time...

—This is nothing that a little guts can't handle!

Fuu transported the boxes with the honor of a leader.

Books were lined up on the shelf. They were masterpieces. Books that could not fit on the shelf were piled up on the floor.

—Ahh, that sure worked up a good sweat! Now we've sorted through most of it.

—We got it all organized in one go~ Thank you so much everyone~

—It was nothing. I got the feeling that I ate too much udon the last two days, so it was just the right exercise to burn it all off.

—In that case, it's free reading time~ As thanks, you guys can read any book you want. If you find any fun books, tell me too, okay~

—We can pick and choose, huh... let's see... which one...

—Ah, Tougou-san's already reading fervently. Hmmm.... All these books look difficult... I might not even understand what's written in them. Do you read books, Karin-chan?

—Can't you tell from seeing my place? I don't read that much.

Out of the members of the Hero Club, Sonoko, Itsuki, and Tougou were readers. Fuu would at least read recommended books. Yuuna read too, but she was a slow reader. Karin read smoothly, but only things she was interested in.

Everyone else started fishing through the books, so for now, Yuuna decided to start as well. She thought she might as well look for any unusual books. With that thought in mind, Yuuna glanced through the bookshelf. She casually took a book off the shelf. When she opened it, there were several parts censored in black marks by the Taisha.

—Wow, look guys, this book's pitch black!

—This book is like that too. They've been censored.

—In the Divine Era, there's an abundance of documents from after the year 100, but there are few from before that.

—The Christian Era doesn't have much following the year 2015, either.

As everyone talked about the censored books, Tougou alone was silently reading.

—I wonder what this book might be? It's quite big.

Her eyes fell on a book that looked like an encyclopedia. Tougou took that book out as if she were drawn to it. It was apparently an old century terminology dictionary. It was filled with words that even they were quite familiar with, all uncensored. She flipped through that book, and...

—? There's another book inside this book...

It was a small book, but it was placed inside the encyclopedia. When she looked inside, there were several parts that were blotted out with black ink.

—It's been censored... but still. The censored date is from Divine Era year 99...

She casually looked at the front cover of the book. It said:

Hero’s Record

It was an old book, but the title was clearly written there.

—Hero’s Record... That name!?

It was the same title as the diary Sonoko had recorded when she was worshiped, the Hero’s Record. But that diary was written by Sonoko starting in Divine Era year 298. The book in question was quite old, and judging by the censored date, it had to be from before Divine Era year 99 at the latest.

So what exactly could this Hero’s Record be?

—Yuuna-chan, everyone, come here!

Tougou called for everyone before she let herself get thrown into confusion by herself. Hero Club Five Tenets: If you're worried, talk to someone. She presented the book she had found.

—Huh, I never knew we had a book like this~ 'Hero’s Record'? That's the same name I gave to my diary, huh...

—So in other words, this is a diary written by a hero? ... But weren't you guys the first generation of heroes?

—... I'm not sure, but what's inside~...?

—Uwah, it's all blotted out, huh.

—But look at this. The date written in this diary isn't censored. It says the diary began to be recorded in July 2015.

—So this is a diary from before we entered the Divine Era...

—You found something amazing, Tougou-san!

—Indeed, it's quite exciting.

—Are there any concrete descriptions in it that haven't been blotted out?

—Let's see~ Hmmm~ This page isn't black~ Ah, the last page!

On the last page was a mention of the book's author. There was even a photograph of her. It was a girl about the same age as Tougou and the other girls. She was a dignified beauty.

—The person in this photograph... looks quite beautiful, doesn't she?

—She kinda has the same aura as Nogi, don't you think?

—Hey, wait, her name's written here.

Nogi Wakaba

—Nogi... Wakaba... Is she my ancestor~? If she wrote this diary, then does that mean my ancestor was a hero?

—Sonocchi's ancestor wrote a Hero's Record. No, perhaps I should say that since you're her descendant, and that's why you gave your diary the same title?

—There were already heroes that far back in the past, huh... This doesn't look like a prank at all, either... That's quite a surprise, huh, Yuuna?

—...

—Yuuna, what's wrong?

—...

—Yuuna?

July 30, 2015 CE
Everything began on that day…

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THE END